

M. MATSUSHITA et al.
U.S.S.N.: 10/766,777
Page 11

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JAN 03 2007

REMARKS

Claims 1-17 are pending. Claim 10 is amended, claims 11 and 12 are canceled, without prejudice, and claims 18-23 are added. Support for the amendments to claim can be found throughout the claims and specification as filed, and no new matter is presented. Applicant appreciates the Examiner's thorough examination of the subject application and requests reconsideration of the subject application based on the following remarks.

1. 35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

Claims 10, 13-14, and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,565,899 to Sugimoto et al (hereinafter "Sugimoto") and U.S. Patent No. 6,036,305 to Nagasaki et al. (hereinafter "Nagasaki").

Without agreeing with this rejection, Applicants have amended claim 10 to incorporate allowable claim 11. Further, new claim 18 is directed to allowable claim 12, and new claim 23 is directed to allowable claim 15.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claims 10, 18, and 23 are patentable over Sugimoto and Nagasaki. Claims 13, 14, 16, and 19-22 depend from claims 10 and 18 and, likewise, are patentable over Sugimoto and Nagasaki. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

3. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the notification in the Office Action of allowable subject matter, i.e. that claims 11, 12, and 15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, and that claims 1-9 and 17 are allowable.

M. MATSUSHITA et al.
U.S.S.N.: 10/766,777
Page 12

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JAN 03 2007

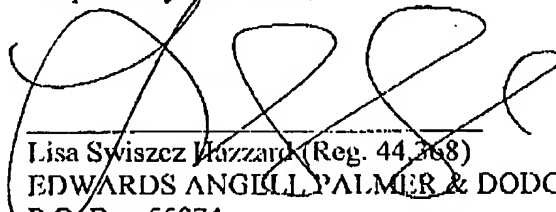
CONCLUSION

It is believed the application is in condition for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner wish to discuss any of the amendments and/or remarks made herein, the undersigned attorney would appreciate the opportunity to do so.

If for any reason a fee paid is inadequate or credit is owed for any excess fee paid, you are hereby authorized and requested to charge or credit Deposit Account No. 04-1105 under order no. 60710 (70904).

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 1/3/07


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